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ABSTRACT

Public receptivity to open education as a specific example of school reform has sometimes been less than enthusiastic. For this reason, the would-be progressive school principal faces a challenging task of inquiry, information, persuasion, and affirmative action. It is explicit in the story of British open education that the head teacher plays a vital role in the development and support of the program. Similarly, a strong assumption in American writings is that the principal will and must be an educational leader. It follows, then, that unless principals do commit themselves to the cause of open education, that cause may not flourish. Leadership in planning, provisioning, and more imaginative exploitation of the school's physical environment is one of the important contributions a principal can make. (Author)

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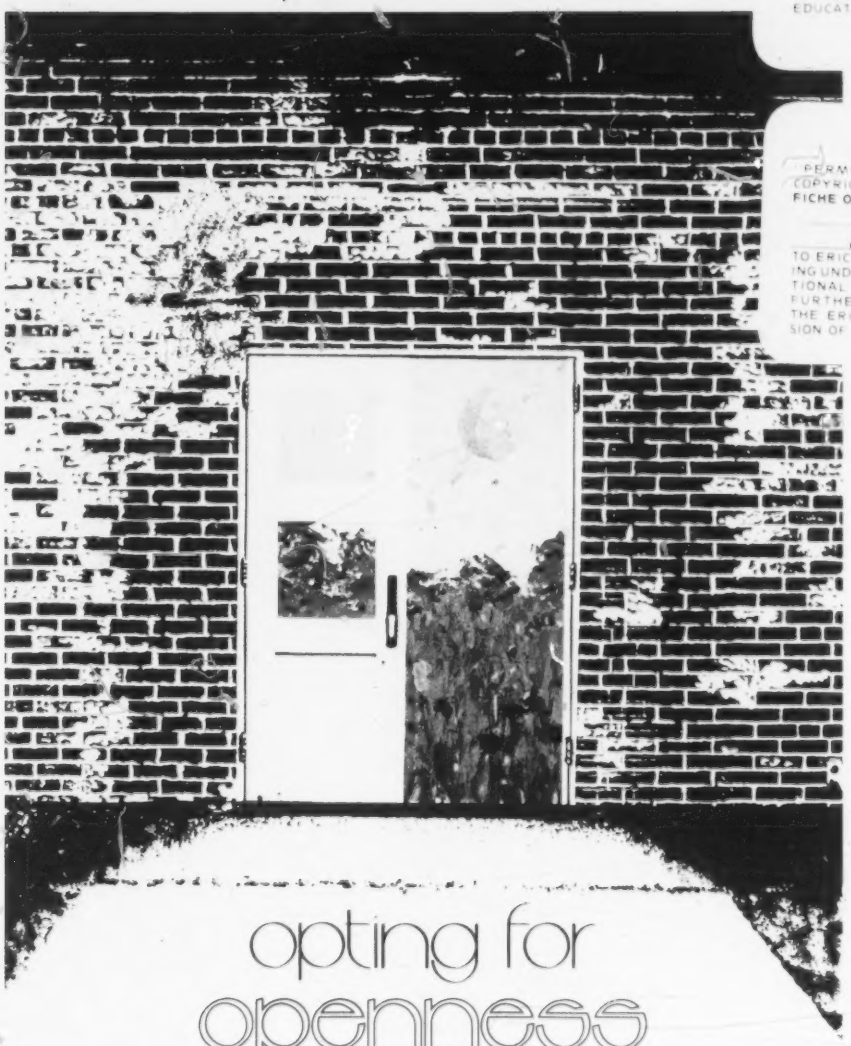

# opting for openness

*Robert H. Anderson*

With a Foreword by
*Vito Perrone*

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

EA 005 488

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# Foreword

Bob Anderson is a fitting author for a book on open education. He has devoted much of his professional life to working actively with teachers, principals, and parents who are concerned about how to make elementary schools more responsive to children and their learning needs, and he has provided them with valuable insights into sound educational theory as well as practice. His beliefs about children and learning are basic to the philosophy of open education—for example, that learning is a personal matter that varies for different children, proceeds best when children are actively engaged in their own learning, takes place in a variety of settings in and out of school, and is enhanced in a supportive environment where children are taken seriously. His experience in helping teachers and principals affirm such beliefs in practice has provided him with an important perspective about what is currently called open education.

Teachers and principals who are wary of bandwagons should be reassured by this book. Open education, Bob Anderson makes very clear, is hardly a new direction in education. Its roots are very deep, some going back centuries. Jean Jacques Rousseau, Leo Tolstoy, Friedrich Froebel, Johann Pestalozzi, Maria Montessori, John Dewey, Alfred North Whitehead, Nathan and Susan Isaacs, and Jean Piaget, whose writings inspired much of what is called open education, are already familiar to educators, as are the progressive education movement of the 1930's and 1940's and the more recent informal schools of England. In addition, the educational literature of the 1960's (in which such persons as Bob Anderson and John Goodlad played a dominant role) concentrated on individualization, multiage grouping, nongradedness, self-enhancing education, and the use of open space and the larger community environment.

Anderson addresses this historical base well, but he makes it plain that open education is *not* "what all of us are already doing." Educational practice is far short of meeting the tenets of open education that are summarized so well in this book. Unlike other times, however, when most educators assented intellectually to such beliefs but stopped short of implementing them, large numbers of teachers, principals, and parents are now actively attempting to put them into practice.

During the past few years open education has grown so popular that it runs the risk of becoming nothing more than a label. And labels, as most of us know, often lead to sloppy, thoughtless practice. Bob Anderson is sensitive to this. He describes the practice of open education for what it is: commitment to children, careful planning, hard work for the teacher, and a significantly different support role for the principal. He takes it beyond the loose discussions of "freedom" and "nonstructure" that appear in much of the popular press. Like other practitioners, he knows that children need structures to provide a sense of order and of meaningful options before they can establish a sustaining direction for learning, and he knows that the teacher must be an active agent—not only a provisioner, but a stimulator and catalyst for extended learning.

Bob poses the question, "What makes Ichabod so timid?" And although I have found that parents—especially those who have been involved with children and materials in the classroom—are more positive in

their response to open education than Bob suggests, it seems clear that increased parent participation is central to open education. Where such participation is extensive, open education is able to flourish. But I recognize that increasing parent participation significantly, opening the doors to the outside, does pose some difficulties. Teachers need assistance in using added human resources well, and they need increased levels of support from principals. Principals, too, need to learn new skills and engage in new roles.

The literature on open education grows weekly. Some of it is quite good, providing increasing perspectives on the theory and practice of open education, but much of it adds little to current knowledge. Not so with this book. For example, Bob has developed an especially useful bibliography. He also provides principals with some excellent practical aids. He is correct when he says that principals play a critical role in successful open education programs. We may have erred in our efforts to establish more open processes by concentrating too much of our attention on teachers and parents. We should also give more assistance to principals. Bob Anderson has taught me a great deal in this regard.

I hope that readers will use this book as part of their continued reexamination of the practice of education. Reaffirming a commitment to children and to their emotional and intellectual growth, which is the central focus of open education, will not be an easy task in our overcurriculumized, test conscious, isolated schools. This book can serve as a good starting point.

*Vito Perrone*
*Grand Forks, North Dakota*
*May 1973*

# Author's Preface and Confessions

The National Association of Elementary School Principals has embarked on the publication of a series of books, of which a recent and impressive example is Sir Alec Clegg's *Revolution in the British Primary Schools* (1971). In April 1972 Paul Houts asked me to prepare one on the open school program as it is developing in the United States. The invitation delighted me, although I pointed out with some concern that: a) there is already a huge literature on the subject, b) Alec Clegg and Alexander Frazier (in his excellent ASCD booklet *Open Schools for Children)* have admirably addressed the topic from the practical schoolman's point of view, and c) given my own experience and history I would probably write the word "open" with a rather broad brush. I'm struck by a feeling of *déjà vu,* I confessed to Paul and have recently discovered—alarum of alarums!—that I'm not much of a Young Turk any more. The wheel was invented even before I came along.

"Good," said Paul in his gentle way, "your perspective will be invaluable."

And so in September, following a summer overseas, I set about this project. With the help of a graduate seminar and numerous friends (notably Edward Yeomans, Henry Olds, Roland Barth, and Victor Atkins), I waded into the aforementioned huge literature. I visited open classrooms and talked with a number of the earnest and enthusiastic people who were "running" them. We looked at films and listened to tapes. We argued philosophy and we argued practice. By December, though quite overwhelmed by the complexity and depth of the subject, I was nonetheless grateful to Paul for having forced this clarifying experience upon me. I had also become much more humble about my expertise in elementary education. It is such a rich and growing field that to comprehend it fully is an epic achievement indeed.

This booklet was written during the Christmas holidays. Paul graciously gave me a few extra weeks so that my friends and students could help me eliminate the worst errors. The others remain for you to titter about, or to embrace.

*R.H.A.*
*Harvard University*
*Cambridge, Massachusetts*
*April 1973*

# Synoptic Introduction

Although the organization of the book does not follow exactly the order of the ideas presented here, it may be helpful at the outset to review certain facts, conclusions, or arguments that in sum compose this book. Certain of them, once stated, probably need little elaboration. To most of them, however, we shall return.

1. There is at present on the American scene a great deal of talk and excitement about "openness" (in various forms) and its presumed benefits for children (and, therefore, for teachers and parents).

2. "Open education," a term Americans use to describe certain practices, beliefs, and assumptions associated with contemporary schools for young children in England, represents a goal toward which many schools seem to be directing their energies. The term "open education" may not remain with us permanently, since further research and experience will help to ripen and clarify the idea base, and different labels may eventually seem preferable. For now, however, "open" seems a useful adjective.

3. Other forms of openness, all of which seem to be compatible with "open education," include: a) architectural flexibility, b) the larger community that opens its resources to pupils, c) the school that opens its doors to permit more interplay with its community, and d) the humane psychological environment that is based essentially on a trusting view of man.

4. The widespread application in public schools of the philosophical and psychological foundations of open education (in the narrower definition) is a distinct and admirable achievement of British education. Open education can be traced, however, through at least a century of American and European educational history, and both British and American versions are built on the same philosophical and psychological foundations.

5. Within the American "educational reform movement" circa 1955-70 there were developed, albeit imperfectly and with generally disappointing results, several practices or approaches that remain potentially significant and that appear to offer a support base for open education. (See the glossary for related terms.) These include especially:

- ☐ nongraded programs encouraging continuous pupil progress
- ☐ cooperative teaching (with differentiated staffing)
- ☐ mixed age class or team assignments
- ☐ flexible and varied pupil grouping arrangements
- ☐ flexible scheduling of spaces and resources
- ☐ programed instruction and the dramatic expansion of available instructional resources
- ☐ curriculum revisions, particularly those acknowledging great differences in pupil interests, needs, and learning styles
- ☐ independent study, team learning, the use of pupil tutors, and other variations of child centered rather than teacher dominated instruction.

6. The assumptions, beliefs, and premises on which open education is based are at some variance with the views and practices of typical American teachers. Furthermore, the efficacy of openness as an educational approach has not yet been demonstrated or justified with any finality. (Neither, of course, has the conventional approach.) It is not unreasonable to claim that evidence and argument seem weighted in favor of openness.

*When a term like "activity schools" is widely accepted, some persons apply it to their current program without really doing what the term implies, while others adopt the ideas and apply them without giving their work the new title.*

Ralph W. Tyler

*. . . when something new like "openness" comes along, we ought to give it a hard look to be sure it has something more than a slogan to offer. I am inclined to think that it does, but I also believe that much educational foolishness will be committed in its name.*

Harold Howe II

7. The typical principal and his staff cannot afford the luxury of waiting until educational research (in all its broad dimensions) provides durable, airtight, and surefire guidelines to practice. The well-being of hundreds of children is at stake and will be affected either adversely or positively by the stance the school staff adopts. The risks of a conservative posture seem at this juncture much greater than those of one that at least seeks to understand and to test the options of openness.

8. Happily, a good start has been made in explicating the tenets and operational characteristics of open education, so that this task can be approached with less apprehension. Furthermore, the current literature of open education, though somewhat negligent of the broader history on whose lessons we can draw, has a refreshing vigor and vitality that should endorse it to its readership. Also, it is commendably realistic in its emphasis upon voluntarism, gradualism, and the exercise of options with which different types of teachers, parents, and pupils can be comfortable.

Open education is somewhat unique in that its proponents are wisely inclined to use the term "evolution" in preference to "revolution."

9. Conservatism among educators at all levels, even in more favorable periods such as 1955-70, is deep rooted and widespread. The importance and the difficulty of teachers' work are poorly reflected in the undemanding laws that govern certification, which do not set a high enough competency based standard of preparation for entry. Teachers also receive insufficient preservice and inservice training, and low expectations are reflected in the ways their work is organized and rewarded. Administrators (including consultants on whom they call) have too little training and skill in the dynamics of planned change. Furthermore, the American educational enterprise is a poorly organized, decentralized system in which every school or school district

"goes it alone." Mobility among the more venturesome teachers and administrators is extremely high; the less venturesome tend to stay put. As a result, it takes decades and even centuries for deserving and necessary reforms to come about.

10. In the early 1970's hard times set in. Educational reforms have not lived up to expectations; major societal problems remain unsolved and apparently unimproved by educational efforts; conservatives and critics have stopped or slowed many innovative programs; financial crises have supported the conservative trends; and educators (who are suddenly in oversupply) have been more and more on the defensive.

11. Public receptivity to open education, as a specific example of school reform, has sometimes been less than enthusiastic. Critical parents tend to question whether more "structured" teaching may not be more effective, at one or another point in time, for certain types of children.

12. Given these conditions, the would-be progressive principal faces a challenging task of inquiry, information, persuasion, and affirmative action.

13. Explicit in the story of British open education is that the head teacher plays a vital role in the development and support of the program. Similarly, a strong assumption in American writings is that the principal will and must be an educational leader —as contrasted with a mere manager or even an able administrator—to an extraordinary degree. Given other recent assertions to the effect that principals have much more influence, for both good and bad, than has generally been credited to them, it follows that unless principals *do* commit themselves to the cause of open education, that cause may not flourish.

14. The way teachers and pupils use space and equipment can make an enormous difference in the quality of education. Leadership in planning, provisioning, and more imaginative exploitation of the school's physical environment is one of the important contributions a principal can make.

15. Significant progress of any kind in education, including the flowering of openness, will depend ultimately on a very high standard of professional commitment and performance. This requires, among other things, a deeper and more professional relationship between principals and teachers than most American educators have ever known.

# Clarifying a Four-letter Word

When one examines the many meanings of "open," it turns out to be a remarkably positive word. Except where openness may be embarrassing (an open shower door) or dangerous (an open wound), it nearly always connotes a healthy, flexible, friendly, unrestricted situation or circumstance. "Open covenants, openly arrived at" is a politician's phrase for doing diplomatic business properly. An open house extends warm hospitality to its guests. An open door offers unhindered opportunity for access. To be open eyed is to be safely alert. To be open handed is to give freely and generously. An open heart implies a kindly and receptive spirit on the part of its owner. And even an open question, though it suggests uncertainty, is one that we nevertheless are inclined to hope will be settled to our satisfaction.

Therefore the choice of an adjective like "open" in connection with educational practices is a deliberately positive, optimistic, and assuring one —especially since the formality, rigidity, and excessive structure of traditional education have been the concern of most reformers over the past century. Words like "nongraded" have proved inadequate, and even the adjective "progressive" lacks dimension.

In the Introduction several types of openness were briefly mentioned. One of these, which is rather specific to the British scene and which describes a virtual cult among Americans who have embraced the faith, dominates the current literature and appears to have a near monopoly on the term. However, in this booklet we will by no means restrict our discussion to the British model. We will respect it, yes; and much that follows is geared to it. But, seeing much consonance between the British model and other forms of openness, we will without apology assert that the open education movement is much wider, much more eclectic, and therefore much less mysterious than some of the cultists would have us believe.

Schooling (and its equivalents) may be:

1. ***Open with respect to the internal physical environment***. Within school buildings this may mean that the walls between certain classroom size spaces have either been removed (or omitted, in the case of newly planned structures); made operable so that they can be "eliminated" as desired; or minimized so that the spaces can be combined with ease, thus making possible all sorts of human and material arrangements. It may also mean that the design of the school provides large rooms that are the equivalent of four or more standard size classrooms and within which teams or clusters of teachers (and other adults) and their children have easy access to the total available space. Usually the open space concept involves relatively large instructional materials centers whose layout and location permit easy sharing and easy rearrangement of resources as conditions require.

2. ***Open with respect to the surrounding physical environment.*** This may mean that the educational program is pursued not only in a place satisfying the conventional definition of a school, but also in various other spaces within the surrounding community. This could mean that students spend their time in an alternative school building, such as a converted garage, storefront, warehouse, or religious building in which presumably

unconventional learning approaches are in use. Or it could mean that much (or even all) of the students' learning is taking place in the greater community itself: museums, libraries, banks, newspaper plants, factories, company offices, department stores, warehouses, and countless other places.

3. ***Open with respect to the organization and administration of the school.*** In the ways that it enrolls, classifies, assigns, and groups children, openness implies a more subtle though more dynamic structure* than that of the conventional graded school. In the ways that time and instructional resources are regulated and utilized, openness implies fewer conventional practices and restraints. In the ways that human resources are utilized and in the kinds of interaction that are encouraged between the adults on the staff, openness usually implies more fluid arrangements than those associated with the self-contained classroom.

4. ***Open with respect to the curriculum.*** Although basic skills and other familiar objectives are not necessarily neglected, a program defined as open is generally rather closely related to children's immediate interests and concerns, and each child has many options and choices with respect to what he will study, how he will go about it, how long he will be involved in it, and what he expects or hopes to

* The subtlety of "structure" in the open school perhaps deserves further discussion. Structure in the open classroom emerges from:

- choice, arrangement, and accessibility of materials
- division of available space into functional centers of activity, which may be changed periodically
- deliberate provision for choice by children in the use of time, in forming groups, and in tempo and style of work
- the teacher's view of varying needs of individuals, whether alone or in groups
- collaboration (teaming) of teachers
- habits of self-direction, group responsibility, and social interaction among students
- housekeeping.

achieve.* Teachers serve as resource persons, guides, and helpers, and there is more "learning by doing" than responding to lessons and instructions prepared by the teacher.

5. ***Open with respect to a humane and child centered approach.*** This might be defined in a phrase as "open hearted," since it implies that within the total educational framework the child's happiness and well-being is a central concern and that the teachers strive in every possible way to create a loving and accepting environment.

* On the question of choice a few comments may be helpful. While choices are important, they cannot be determining. Children must be taught to read, to work with quantity, to use materials well, to "housekeep," to behave, and to acknowledge standards of many kinds. Balance and proportion are the important things: The teacher must know when to "teach" and when not to, when to be authoritative and when to be receptive, when and how to stimulate, and when and how to control. Furthermore, the teacher must have goals in mind for each individual, and if an individual is abusing freedom, he must be called to account.

The above brief explanations are undoubtedly inadequate, but they provide an introduction to the several forms of openness in which American educators are interested. Quite often the term applies to a *combination* of these forms, with form 5 (humaneness) as an implicit dominant motif and with form 3 (functional openness) and form 4 (curriculum openness) in strong evidence. Even though conventional walls may be present, there are almost always some manifestations of form 1 (a flexible physical environment) when other open forms are being used. Form 2, which is usually associated with secondary and college level programs, includes the open campus plan and the school-without-walls approach pioneered by Philadelphia's Parkway Program. However, it also plays a part at the elementary level, and there are advocates who believe that openness embracing all five of the above types is a goal toward which all educators should be moving. I share that bias.

# Acknowledging and Appreciating the Past

There is and has been a lamentable tendency among educators, particularly (though not exclusively) in the American context, to disregard the experience and advice of others. The history of education is not well known by its practitioners, with the consequence that many valuable lessons have been lost, many valuable clues ignored, and many mistakes wastefully repeated. Instead of building on deserving and successful (or at least promising) practices, we have tended to let each run its course, get swallowed up by the established monolith, and be soon forgotten. Continuity in either frontier practice or related research is therefore rare, even in venturesome schools and communities that momentarily attract the nation's attention. In the United States, where the tradition of "local control" and essential educational autonomy tends to encourage a self-centered and idiosyncratic approach, this problem is a particularly severe one. We pay too little attention to what our neighbors are doing, much less to what our ancestors learned.

It is not within the purview of this booklet to examine all the roots and antecedents of open education, especially in a global or even Western European sense. Many writers refer to Plato, with his "maturationist" view of early childhood learning, as a continuing force in modern educational thought. Leo Tolstoy[1] and Jean Jacques Rousseau[2] are seen as important contributors because "they were early thinkers who drew connections between an optimistic view of human nature and the role of philosophical assumptions in the process of education."[3] Friedrich Froebel, a seminal figure in the development of the kindergarten with its emphasis on activities, and Johann Friedrich Pestalozzi are two others whose work remains influential.

Within the present century the contributions of Maria Montessori, John Dewey, Alfred North Whitehead, and Nathan and Susan Isaacs provide a basic framework. The German educator Peter Petersen, who developed the *Jenaplanschule* (schools with mixed age classes and what Americans later called nongradedness), and the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget are two others whose current impact remains great. To Piaget, perhaps especially, belongs much credit for the insight that children go invariably through certain growth stages, learning over varying periods of time and through repeated encounters with concrete experiences and in exchanges of differing points of view.

Most Americans realize that the graded structure they adopted in the mid-nineteenth century was derived largely from European practice. Advocated by Comenius in the seventeenth century, the graded concept as developed in Prussia was extolled by Horace Mann in 1843 after his visit there. The monitorial system developed by Bell and Lancaster during a period of industrialization in England spurred the movement toward free public education and was influential in the shaping of American school practice in the nineteenth century.

Graded structure, of course, has been repudiated in this century, again in part because of European educators like Petersen and Piaget. The monitorial plan, by contrast, assumed a new and more acceptable form around 1955 when, in the Yale-Fairfield and Bay City projects, Americans became

*Two important facts become evident when we examine the educational history of the past half-century. The first is that almost every reform that attained national scope embodied some valuable innovative educational ideas that deserved to be incorporated into the instruction offered in the schools. The second is that most of the innovations were poorly understood in the schools . . . or were starved for resources to implement them . . ., and were therefore delayed and deformed in their implementation . . . and often perished, sweeping good ideas into oblivion along with the bad.*

Morris L. Cogan

interested in differentiated staffing and the inclusion of teacher aides in the school personnel structures.

The full story of how American and European educators have influenced each other over the centuries will perhaps be known to us some day. Doubtless it will contain many surprises, especially for chauvinists, uncritical hero worshipers, and the self-appointed heroes who feel that they have recently discovered pure truth. Heroes indeed there are, and when we examine their work in the context of the times in which they lived, we are all the more impressed with their achievements. At the same time, we invariably discover that however fresh and creative was their contribution, their debt is large to others who came before and over several generations—back at least to Plato, in fact.

***Progressive education: the great watershed.*** No matter on which side of the Atlantic Ocean you may reside, your debt to John Dewey in particular and to the progressive education movement in general is incalculable. The continuing vitality of that movement, whose history was well documented by Lawrence Cremin,[4] is particularly visible in open education and in other versions of openness. British educators frequently cite Dewey as a shaping force in their own work, and the excellent 1972 ASCD yearbook, *A New Look at Progressive Education*,[5] shows the significant relationship between progressive education and today's efforts to reform American education.

Progressive education, Cremin reminds us, was not exclusively an educational reform, but rather a "part and parcel of the broader program of social and political reform called the Progressive Movement. . . . [Further,] the idea had its origin during the quarter-century before World War I in an effort to cast the school as a fundamental lever of social and political regeneration. It began as a many-sided protest against a restricted view of the school, but it was always more than this: Essentially it viewed edu-

cation as an adjunct to politics in realizing the promise of American life."[6]

An interesting side story of progressive education, as told by Cremin, demonstrates that, then as now, the inadequacies of the schools were fair game in the public media. In 1892-93 Joseph Mayer Rice, a pediatrician-turned-educational-critic, wrote a series of articles for *The Forum* in which American schools were appraised on the basis of a personal tour in thirty-six cities. His disclosures of poor practices and his recommendations for their correction (which, incidentally, led to the development of testing and stimulated educational research) apparently had an electric effect on the educational establishment of the time, and his praise of "progressive" schools and programs (such as Francis W. Parker's Cook County Normal School) became a call for their more widespread development.

One is reminded, reviewing the role that Rice played, of some amazing parallels on the current American scene. Charles E. Silberman, whose *Crisis in the Classroom* grew out of a similar study, disclosed many of the same disturbing practices, and ended with praise of open education as a model for future development. Also intriguing is the fact that Rice gained some of the insights that guided his investigation from pedagogical studies at Leipzig and Jena, where Peter Peterson later developed the *Jena-planschule*.

Along with Parker, described by Dewey himself as the "father of progressive education," Superintendent William Wirt of Gary, Indiana, was a leading proponent of progressive practices. Gary was a new city in 1906, and as its first superintendent Wirt had the unique opportunity to develop the practices and ideas he had gained as a pupil and disciple of Dewey. Wirt himself identified two "fixed principles" to which he adhered:

> First: All children should be busy all day long at work, study, and play under right conditions.
>
> Second: Cities can finance an adequate work-study-and-play program only when the facilities of the entire community for the work, study, and play of children are properly coordinated with the school, the coordinating agent, so that all facilities supplement one another and "peak loads" are avoided by keeping all facilities of the school plan in use all of the time.[7]

Educators aware of the role played in the flowering of open education in the United States by Joseph Featherstone's articles (circa 1967) in *The New Republic* will appreciate the role played by that same magazine with reference to the Gary Plan in 1915. Randolph Bourne, who later expanded the articles into a book,[8] was the journalist whose enthusiastic reports caused the already well-regarded plan to become literally world famous. In Cremin's words, *The New Republic* series "was undoubtedly the most lucid nonprofessional exposition of educational reform of the decade, and won for Bourne an enduring place in the progressive-education movement."[9]

Although the Gary Plan suffered severe setbacks, particularly when its advocates tried to "Garyize" New York City, in its heyday it extended to more than 1,000 schools in 200 or more communities. Significantly, conservatism and resistance on the part of school administrators and teachers ranked among the main causes for its eventual decline. Beyond doubt, however, it played a significant role in twentieth century educational thought.

Bourne's book was reissued in 1970, supplemented with recent commentary and also with an abridged version of a critique of the Gary system done in 1918 by Abraham Flexner and Fr[illegible] P. Bachman. It is a most valuable volume, not only as a description of Gary's experiences but also as a commentary on the great problems of implementing change. It is a sobering document for those who imagine that there is immediate novelty in concepts

such as relevance in education, the learning community, the educational park, the community school, team teaching, continuous progress, cost accountable school management, and activity centered learning.

The Dewey School at the University of Chicago (1896-1904) was probably the most famous and over the long haul the most influential of all the examples of progressive education that are known to have existed. Cremin declares that by 1904, when Dewey departed for Columbia University, "the school had become the most interesting experimental venture in American education; indeed there are those who insist that there has been nothing since to match it in excitement, quality, and contribution." [10]

Peculiarly, and regrettably, the best available account of the Dewey School and how it functioned was not published until 1936, and at the time it attracted less attention than it deserved.[11] Written by two sisters who taught in the school, it includes an essay by Dewey himself that enjoys the advantage of a time perspective. Those who would know more about the school, the aims and procedures of which bear a remarkable resemblance to the "novel" British primary schools, can profitably turn to that volume or to Cremin.

Fascinating to me, when I first discovered Dewey's essay about ten years ago, was that he had been among the first to argue for team teaching. Though he called it "cooperative social organization," the staffing arrangement he proposed was scarcely to be confused with the one teacher, one class arrangement to which American educators (some of them, surprisingly, of presumably progressive persuasion) became so passionately addicted.

Vynce Hines recently commented on this discrepancy when he observed that the delayed appearance of *The Dewey School* was "a great tragedy for American education. Had the Dewey School experience with the 'self-contained' classroom been known and heeded, American education might not have followed this path so long and so dogmatically." [12] Hines goes on to lament the short life of the Dewey School, on grounds that theoretically based secondary schools (including something better than the junior high schools that did develop) might have been developed as a counterpart to the elementary schools that, in various forms, grew from Dewey's early work.

Within the literature of open education, and indeed of elementary and early childhood education more broadly defined, there is recurring reference to the themes that once were associated with progressive education. For one thing, the relevance and the legitimacy of conventional organizational structures continue to be questioned; and in fact a rereading of Joseph Mayer Rice and others who long ago examined and deplored those structures makes us marvel at their longevity and cringe at their malevolence.

One significant venture that grew out of the work of Dewey and like-minded educators was the so-called Eight-Year Study (1932-40), under the auspices of the Commission on the Relation of School and College. Thirty secondary schools participated in the program, which aimed to extend the philosophy and concepts of progressive education into the secondary level. Over 300 colleges agreed to waive their usual entrance requirements for the recommended graduates of these experimental schools, and on the whole the Study enjoyed notable success and had a healthy impact on American education. Unfortunately, World War II and other factors tended to blunt that impact, but the legacy of the Eight-Year Study (including a five-volume report that, even after some thirty years, is a rich lode [13]) should not go unappreciated in our review of progressive education.

We continue to seek, as did the progressives, more humane and flexible ways of managing schools and dealing with the persons who occupy them, adults and children alike. We

seek to enjoy better links with the community, as they did. We seek, as did Wirt in particular, to operate efficiently without diminishing the educational opportunities it is our mission to provide.

But it is in classroom events, rather than in organizational arrangements, where the major impact of schooling is felt by children. Our quest, with that of the progressives, is to find ways, in James Squire's words:

> to free pupils from the demands of an inflexible system, to encourage inquiry and creativity, to develop higher intellectual skills, to probe value systems, and to relate the experiences of education to the social and cultural contexts in which they occur; above all, to seek an integration of purpose, need, and interest in learning within the individual.[14]

Contemporary classroom practices as described by Silberman and dozens of other recent writers, remain (with exceptions, thank God!) terribly similar to those from which the progressives sought to part company.

Progressive education was a great watershed in educational history, both American and British. It represented a break with the past and offered new or at least revised guidelines for the future. In some ways it failed, especially when we consider how stubbornly the nonprogressive tradition has persisted. However, its values and themes live on, the more powerful for their own persistence, and in the fresh setting of open education it promises to enjoy more and more widespread acceptance and success.

# Supporting Concepts and Mechanisms

From about 1955 to 1970 American education went through a series of related and sometimes dramatic changes. In that period, hundreds of published articles and at least a score of books used words like "revolution" or "radical reform" in their titles or section headings. In Wall Street terms education went through a "bullish" period in those years, and various "innovations" were tested and developed in an atmosphere of cheerful optimism. Much of this innovative activity was financed by various foundations—in particular the Ford Foundation—and for the first time in history, truly significant support by the federal government became a factor on the innovative scene.

Unfortunately this educational reform movement, which apparently held such promise during its early years, lost much of its momentum and a great deal of its support (moral and financial) in the early 1970's. This was not altogether the fault of the reforms themselves, since many of them are demonstrably valid and workable, but it must be admitted that accomplishment fell well below expectation in almost every facet of reform. Furthermore, the disillusionment and disappointment of the American people with respect to other and more urgent problems (such as the war in Indochina, the plight of the cities, racial and class discrimination, inflation and unemployment, and a general decline of the national spirit) has taken its toll in the schools. Criticism of education, not only from the outside but from within the profession, has been increasingly strident, and for the most part the educational enterprise has been judged ineffectual.

Charles Silberman bespoke the national mood by his very title: *Crisis in the Classroom*. In a chapter entitled "The Failures of Educational Reform," he wrote that "a pervasive sense of crisis" dominates today's educational scene. He attributed this in part to the fact that the reform movement, coupled with social legislation, created expectations for further improvements, of a sort and at a rate that the society was either unable or unwilling to fulfill. Even more painful to the reform educators was Silberman's opinion that in spite of all the changes that were introduced, the schools themselves remain largely unchanged.[15]

Silberman's thesis is supported by the research of John I. Goodlad, who with a team of associates recently visited some 260 kindergarten through third-grade classrooms in 100 schools across the country to determine the extent to which the reform movement had, in fact, changed the schools. Goodlad reports that his team was unable to discern much attention paid to pupils' individual needs, attainments, or problems as a basis for beginning instruction. Teaching was predominantly telling and questioning by the teacher, with children responding one by one or occasionally in chorus; the textbook was the most highly visible instrument of learning. He reluctantly concludes that "much of the so-called educational reform movement has been blunted at the classroom door.[16]

From the Ford Foundation itself has recently come a booklet analyzing and assaying some twenty-five experiments on which it spent thirty million dollars between 1960 and 1970. Concerned primarily with those communities in which the experiments were being supported, the report notes some successes and encouraging discoveries, as well as some failures and discour-

*I'm growing wary of slogans like open education. . . . I think they may do more harm than good. Currently I'm seeking to enlist everybody in favor of open, informal schooling into a movement whose one slogan will be a demand for decent schools.*

Joseph Featherstone

aging factors. Among the "successful" practices that have been adopted by other schools, the report cited team teaching, programed instruction, flexible scheduling, independent study, and nongraded programs.[17]

Silberman, it should be noted, wrote not only in criticism of reform failures but also in lyric support of British open education. His book was one of the most successful and widely read education books of this century, and it probably had as much influence as any other single source in bringing open education to the attention of the American public. Further, his criticisms of the reform movement dealt not with the merit of the reforms but rather with their unsatisfactory implementation.

To abandon the reforms, especially those consistent with and supportive of open education, would therefore be a foolish if not disastrous course. In this section, then, we will take a thorough look at some of them and attempt to show their continuing significance. First and foremost, since I see it as most closely resembling open education, let us look at our old friend nongradedness.

***Nongradedness.*** In a sense it all began in 1848, when the new and exciting Quincy Grammar School opened its doors to pupils in Boston. It was a *graded* school, heralded as the first of its kind in America, and within a dozen years the graded system had been widely adopted across the land, especially in the cities. Obviously the Quincy Grammar School was only one part of a far larger trend that was destined to sweep the nation, but only rarely in history has one particular school had so much influence and enjoyed such a widespread reputation. The idea that it represented changed American education so dramatically that its role in American history is forever secure.*

Attacks against the graded school and the practices associated with it have enlivened American education for at least a hundred years, and most American teachers are at least vaguely aware of the major attempts that have been made to replace it (for example, the Pueblo Plan, 1888; the Dewey School, 1898-1904; progressive education in general; and the Winnetka Plan, 1919-43). Most teachers, too, are aware of the general disillusionment that has accompanied all such efforts, both long ago and in recent years. Gradedness is a well-entrenched, stubborn foe, and the resolute loyalty of many parents and teachers to this outmoded and anachronistic mechanism is a disquieting fact.

In 1959 Goodlad and I published a book describing and advocating nongraded education. It enjoyed a modest success—especially in its 1963 revised edition [18]—and became part of a burgeoning literature that argued for more humane, more flexible, and more individualized school programs.

While we were writing the first edition, several other events and developments were coming into focus on the American educational scene: the dramatic emergence of team teaching as an alternative to the hallowed self-contained classroom; a revival of interest in the deliberate mixing of children of various ages in one classroom;

* The reader will probably be amazed to learn that the original building of the Quincy Grammar School still stands and remains in active use. However, there are plans for its demolition and replacement. Since 1966, with the help of Educational Facilities Laboratories and a Title III grant, citizens, educators, and architects have been at work on proposals and plans for a new school building that, most assuredly, will differ from its predecessor both in design and in the type of program its planners intend for it to house. Since 1967 Boston has provided leadership among the great cities in the planning and construction of exemplary elementary schools. Its new buildings are expected to provide a congenial and flexible environment for open education, and their open spaces are designed for team teaching, nongradedness, multiaged pupil mixtures, and active community involvement. When the new Quincy School begins operation, therefore, American education will have in a sense come full circle.

the growing use of mechanical and electronic devices for teaching information and skills; major efforts at curriculum reform, particularly in mathematics and the sciences; and, spurred by the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision, the first difficult steps toward the elimination of racial segregation in the schools.

In the decade that followed, the work of Jean Piaget became increasingly visible (and audible) as a force in educational thinking, and American scholars with an interest in his ideas began to visit those British schools for which Piaget was probably the most notable source of guiding principles and inspiration. Those Americans who carried with them a background of assumptions and convictions consistent with nongradedness found that the British practices they saw "fit" the values in their own backgrounds. Similarly, the British educators readily found common ground in their discussions with visiting Americans, although they sensed that their own progress toward child centered education was some steps ahead of that of the Americans. Both groups found that, in both theory and practice, the long established American system of graded education was anathema.

In the 1950's and 1960's nongradedness was the subject of a fairly extensive literature, of which *The Nongraded School* (a reprint of articles from the November 1967 and January 1968 issues of *The National Elementary Principal*) was a notable example, and during those years it enjoyed a great deal of attention as one of the major thrusts of educational reform. However, much of what was done by American educators in the name of nongradedness was superficial and halfhearted. More often than not, it went only as far as the adoption of a "levels" system in reading, and perhaps other basic skills, with some improvements in reporting and promotion practices and a slight reduction of the psychological and other pressures associated with the graded lockstep. Most educators failed to grasp the implications for curriculum reform, pupil grouping, and other practices that grow out of the philosophy of nongradedness; and perhaps because there were too few curriculum examples within the literature that advocated nongradedness, only a few educators succeeded in implementing the idea.

If we accept the conclusions of Silberman, Goodlad and Klein, and others, nongradedness has yet to gain a sufficient army of followers, even though it is an intrinsically meritorious concept. On the other hand at least five things can be said in its favor:

1. At the theoretical level, resistance has virtually disappeared, and almost every proposal for the improvement of education is either geared to or consistent with its premises.
2. At the level of practice, it continues to gain acceptance across the nation, albeit very slowly.
3. At least it has broken the time bind in which so many American children have been caught.
4. Research evidence has rarely been unfavorable, and in the past few years it has become increasingly positive.[19]
5. As a movement, nongradedness appears to have contributed significantly to the development of other reforms or ideas that promise to improve the educational well-being of American children.

The idea of the nongraded school did succeed, therefore, in preparing American teachers and parents to understand and appreciate the signals from across the Atlantic. Though it failed, in a sense, to blossom into a healthy movement under its own name and faithful to its own requirements, it helped pave the way for "open education" as a kindred and successor enterprise.

The close relationship between the more recent descriptions of nongraded education and current descriptions of open education was examined by Pavan in a 1972 study.[20] After thoroughly reviewing these literatures,

Pavan developed a set of thirty-six statements of principles—concerning goals of schooling, administrative organizational framework, materials, curriculum, evaluation and reporting, and methods—that are associated with nongradedness. When Pavan's statements are compared with lists of principles or assumptions associated with open education (for example, Roland Barth's, as noted later in this book), certain similarities in philosophy and value orientation become apparent. However, it is also evident that open education in some ways goes beyond the models that the nongraded movement has produced.[21]

There are within the literature of open education some truly fundamental notions about children, teachers, curriculum, and how change in all of these can be brought about. More attention is paid to the quality of children's learning, and less to mechanics. The past mistakes of nongradedness and other movements have not gone undetected by the proponents of open education. Their discussions of the teacher's role and of the learning environment are far more penetrating than those found in the older nongraded literature. In fact, open education seems overall a more profound movement than nongradedness ever managed to become. It would probably be no loss if the term "nongradedness" gradually disappeared from the American vocabulary as open education gains acceptance.

***Other supporting arrangements.*** The vitality of American nongradedness was greatly enhanced in the 1960's by two developments of continuing importance. One, which, significantly, is also a keystone of open education, was the deliberate use of multiage or interage grouping. The other was cooperative teaching, which often involved not only the formation of teaching teams but also the use of nonprofessional and other adult helpers in a differentiated staffing pattern.

Team teaching is a uniquely American development that, though it still has a long way to go in this country, seems clearly destined to become a major feature on the British scene in the years ahead. Especially when it is combined with the practice of mixed age pupil assignment, so that each group of teachers can work with children over a span of two or three years, team teaching creates a setting within which it is far easier for teachers to implement both nongradedness and open education. Although many alternative forms of team teaching can be imagined, what emerges as a highly desirable organizational context for schools in both Britain and the U.S. is a combination of the arrangements we have labeled as: 1) open education, 2) mixed age grouping, and 3) the team organized differentiated staff.

The literature of team teaching, which recently expanded to include discussions of differentiated staffing, offers the relatively simple and straightforward argument that children can be better served when the human and other resources available to them are increased. It also argues that teachers can profit through continuous interchange of ideas and criticisms and through sharing responsibilities with colleagues whose talents augment and complement their own. Its acceptance and development have been surprisingly slow in this country, but given the almost total absence of counterargument, team teaching of some sort is at least an implicit condition in most of the American versions of open education, and British educators are themselves reporting that the combination is emerging.[22]

Although architectural flexibility is not mandatory for successful teaming, it is obviously helpful to have school spaces that were designed, originally or in renovation, for such purposes. It is almost ironic that, despite the fact that teachers are generally unprepared to embrace either teaming or openness, the majority of newly constructed schools in the United States in recent years have been architecturally "open" in ways that facilitate both collaborative teaching and the types of learning activities that open education favors. As a result, architectural provisions have had a generally positive influence in spurring teachers toward a more venturesome *modus operandi*. Active involvement of teachers in the school planning process, it might be noted, can help them accept open arrangements more willingly.

Another bonus in the drive toward more open education has been the slow-but-steady evolution of the instructional materials center (IMC) as a significant component of the elementary school. Although many (perhaps most) schools still lack even a modest library, there is nonetheless a strong interest in providing a space or group of spaces within which not only the usual library functions but a variety of other activities can be accommodated. These include many uses of media and other forms of educational technology; in the more favored situations there are computer terminals, dial-access systems, and other resources that permit highly individualized programs that make use of, for example, film strips, film loops, cassettes, microfiche, picture files, collections, kits, and myriads of loose materials.

# What Makes Ichabod So Timid?

There are many reasons why educational progress tends to be slow even in periods when other aspects of the society are moving forward. It is a basic fact that education, not only in the United States but in nearly every country throughout the ages, has tended to be reactionary rather than progressive, conservative rather than innovative. Except when education has been used deliberately to break ancient molds in connection with major political or social revolutions, societies have tended to fear educational experiments and to stick with established programs and practices. Those with the most power and influence have tended to prefer the status quo for the obvious reason that it has served their interests very well; and within the educational establishment (whether broadly defined or meaning only a single school), "rocking the boat" has in general been more frowned on than encouraged. As a result, educators and their patrons alike have generally been loath to support radical, or even moderate, educational change.

Ironically, even those who presumably stand to benefit most from school reforms tend to be suspicious of them. It is easy to see why the rich and powerful would prefer the existing arrangement, since the values, mythologies, and practices associated with the status quo have rewarded that group so well. The winners within a system rarely suggest that the rules of the competition be altered. On the other hand, those who have not won—or have won too seldom—would seem to have less to lose if the rules, or the game, were changed; they might even have more to win. Although they sharply notice that it is the rich and powerful who win, they tend, nevertheless, to value the stability and predictability of the game: Stay with it, try to master it, and perhaps our time for winning will eventually arrive.

Barth makes this point vividly in discussing an inner city effort at open education he participated in that was, in his own words, a failure. Though the reasons for failure were many, resistance from parents was one of the strongest forces at work. Parents said, "I want my children to get the basics in elementary school. Children can't learn the basics in an open classroom." "Where are the 3 R's? All I see are crafts, weaving, making things out of wood, leather, yarn, weighing things. Where are the *books*?" "I haven't received a single note telling when my child didn't do his work and when he misbehaved. Why not?" And a teacher reported, "One of the parents asked me if my room was some kind of psychological experiment. . . . Did I believe that her child could not function in a neat environment?" [23]

In describing some of the differences in both philosophy and practical approaches between the teachers (who, in this case, were well oriented to open education) and the parents, Barth shows that parents value firm control and "good" (that is, firm) discipline, along the lines of what he calls a military academy model. Fascinating, and a bit alarming, is his further observation that in deploring displays of kindness and permissiveness by teachers, parents seem to be jealously protecting their own relationship with their children:

> In short, some parents appeared to depend for their children's affection on their *not* liking school, on the teacher being an ogre, in which case the parents, by com-

*As long as there are differences in values within the society, there will be differences in thinking about schools. Unless we want to symbolize the triumph of the liberal intellectuals, we are forced to conclude that to the extent that schools are symbols, open schools are not for all communities. If we are serious about a pluralist society, we must accept the legitimacy of a community's choice, whether it be authoritarian, academic, agricultural, or Calvinist.*

Mary Jo Bane

parison, came out ahead. When school becomes pleasant, when the teacher is humane, when the children enjoy school, many parents feel *they* become the ogres.[24]

Having heard much the same sort of complaint from suburban families, I'm not sure that these and other reservations belong to any particular segment of the parent population. However, the legitimacy of less formal instructional approaches and of a more comprehensive curriculum does apparently find more ready acceptance among college-educated families than among those for whom it has the unpleasant aroma of condescension.

I remember poignantly meeting with a group of parents and other citizens in a lower class inner city neighborhood about six years ago. Along with architects and planners, I was to discuss with them the tentative plans for a beautiful new elementary school. We proposed a number of special facilities, including an unusually desirable gymnasium and a swimming pool designed for instructional as well as recreational purposes in addition to open instructional spaces to permit team teaching. Art rooms, a spacious instructional materials center, and other attractive features were proposed. I had assumed that *any* parents, regardless of their socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, would be delighted with such a school for their children and would hesitate only on the tough question of tax cost.

How wrong I was. The swimming pool was perhaps the most unacceptable proposal ("I don't send my children to school to splash around, I send them to learn!"), but the art room ("That's not a basic subject."), the IMC ("They'll waste half the day watching movies, or in chit-chat with each other."), and the idea of team teaching ("My kid needs someone who's on his back every minute, not a whole barnful of teachers who won't even know him.") all got roasted in their turn.

This was only one incident, and of course we of the planning team had made some mistakes in the early stages of planning and communication; but it serves to make a point about laymen's views of education. Happily, the above story (only one aspect of which I have reported here, obviously) had a good ending, and a wonderful new building (pool and all) is now a source of much pride in that community. But the long hours and the hard work that it took to reach agreement and understanding should not be overlooked.

Perhaps the features the parents objected to would not seem desirable to all educators, either. Furthermore, we would all agree that the physical surroundings and the team structure are merely means to more important ends. But I have great confidence that, if implemented, many proposals —including greater emphasis on a comprehensive program in the arts and in physical education—could be a real boon to children and to the adult world they will later occupy. I am thoroughly persuaded that open education, defined broadly as in this booklet, in the hands of a competent and committed staff, can provide higher quality education than most children are now getting. Why, then, is America so slow in moving toward it?

One explanation, to which the balance of this booklet addresses itself, is that we don't have enough of the required professional competence and commitment—educators will have to generate it. Fair enough. But will teachers and administrators be easy to persuade on this score? Will citizens permit them to try? On both counts, it promises to be a tough problem.

New Zealand educator C. E. Beeby has documented the causes of educational conservatism, which lie in the nature of a country's social and economic systems and the generally conservative values they represent.[25] Every educational reform tends to cost money and threaten a host of values and arrangements with which society is comfortable. What is more, the process of educational change is very

time consuming and complicated even under the most friendly and favorable circumstances. On the whole, therefore, it is not easy to obtain public support for major innovations.

These conservative tendencies become stronger in times of crisis and stress. Both education and society follow a cyclical pattern—with the societal direction doubtless influencing the educational—and in the early 1970's American society is clearly in a static or even regressive mood. By contrast with the bullish and progressive decade that began around 1955, the present decade is a bearish, troubled, uncertain one. Educators are "in the doghouse," and their stock is low. Even if that weren't the case, however, economic and other pressures have caused taxpayers to behave less generously toward their schools than they did a few years back.

That the forces of societal conservatism are particularly strong at this point in history, then, is a fact that educators must face. And what of their own disposition? Again, for a general view of tendencies we turn to Beeby. In brief, he points out that: 1) educators are less clear than other professionals about their goals; 2) teachers tend not to understand and accept the reforms they are asked to make; 3) teachers, to an unusual degree, are the products of the system in which they work and to which therefore they tend to be loyal; 4) teachers (except those who work in teams) work and think in isolation from each other; and 5) teachers have a wide range of abilities, including the capacity for adaptation, and "the dead weight of the ill-educated and untrained teachers toward the bottom of the scale hangs heavy on the shoulders of the small proportion eager for change." [26]

Lest the word "teacher" be construed too narrowly, I am assuming that in all general observations about education we have not only the classroom teacher in mind, but also those supervisors, administrators, and other

*To the degree that the educational focus shifts to the future, teachers will no longer be the transmitters of inherited and verified "facts." They will become leaders, but participants nevertheless, in the process of the redefinition and rediscovery of facts.*

Alvin Toffler

specialists who share with teachers the responsibility for children's school experiences. It may be that principals and other leaders have slightly greater professional knowledge and a slightly greater tendency to favor educational innovations than ordinary teachers, but if so the advantage is too little exploited. Like teachers, principals in general: 1) are not goal oriented, 2) know too little about such reforms as open education, 3) are loyal alumni of the establishment, 4) work too much in isolation from other principals and supervisors, and 5) run the gamut from terrible to tremendous on the talent scale. Further, their basic training was for the classroom, and their subsequent training for leadership was probably (by their own criteria) insufficient to the task. Seymour Sarason, in fact, raises some powerful questions about the principalship, partly because prior classroom experience and other factors that normally lead to the selection of principals may be not only inadequate but even "antithetical to appropriate performance in the role." [27]

In an interesting and valuable cross-cultural analysis of the English primary school and American education, Robert Fisher indicates that there is more inertia in America, attributable in part to racial tensions and related socioeconomic and political problems, but also to characteristics of the profession. He describes teacher education as increasingly dysfunctional, especially as preparation for urban teaching; deplores the bureaucratic inflexibility that hampers initiative and creativity; and comments ruefully on bureaucracy's influence:

> Hemmed in by a multitude of regulations, smothered by textbooks, guides, teaching packages, manuals, workbooks, and standardized tests, teachers lose interest in creative self-determination and settle into a more comfortable conformity.[28]

Virtually all commentators, whether on open education or American schooling in general, are agreed that major improvements are needed in the enterprise of teacher education. When we consider how demanding and important the work of teachers (and principals and others) is, we must see that equipping them poorly and providing equally poor inservice help virtually guarantees that they will have problems along the way. It also predisposes them to settle for a repertoire that "works," however inadequate it may be, and thus the conservative tendency so inimical to educational advancement is reinforced.

Later we will examine the proposals of Cogan and others for coping with at least a few aspects of this problem, but for the moment we are sobered by the realization that *professional* conservatism poses an even greater threat to the development of open education than does the present conservative mood of the populace.

# Examining the Tenets of Open Education

Although many of them are by now obvious, we have reached a point where further consideration of the guiding principles and beliefs of open education is appropriate. In doing so, we have several purposes in mind. One is to confirm our earlier assertion that the British based version of open education is remarkably compatible with nongradedness and other examples of American educational innovation. Another is to provide the reader with a means of "inventorying" his convictions and helping his colleagues to evaluate their own states of mind about open education approaches. A third is to set the stage for the practical and procedural suggestions with which this booklet will end.

One of the fascinating things about the recent outbreak of American enthusiasm for the British primary schools is that there have been few literal "conversions" to a completely new faith. The Americans who visited the British schools were deeply impressed with what they saw and heard. No doubt they experienced a significant awakening to new possibilities, but they also recognized and felt comfortable with much in the underlying philosophy of the British efforts. Since it seems probable that these Americans went to England because of a prior commitment to elements of the faith (for example, humane and lively teaching), their subsequent effort in America was scarcely an epic event—it was a logical and predictable next step.

A slow-but-steady nationwide expansion of open education would not necessarily require a miracle of conversion and an overthrow of all that we know and believe. On the contrary, if our interpretation of history is not notably distorted, a great many teachers and principals should find much that is familiar and persuasive in the case for openness. Though a conservative posture is usual in education, the need to implement the tenets of open education is already apparent to thousands of teachers and, given reasonable help, thousands more may elect to exercise the option.

Alexander Frazier points to three dimensions of openness: 1) freeing space for learning, 2) freeing the structure of the school, and 3) freeing the curriculum.[29] Freeing, as he uses the term, is synonymous with emancipation; it implies the removal of restrictions, impediments, habits, frameworks, locksteps, regulations, pressures, and other clutter that reduces options and opportunities for the maximum and optimum development of children. Its advocacy implies that, in the advocate's mind, the existing educational apparatus precludes or stifles the exercise of such options to some significant extent. Probably no single notion is more basic to reforms labeled "open" this or "open" that. Unless one is persuaded of its veracity, there is no reason to cooperate with open education—or, for that matter, most other reform proposals.

Another notion of crucial importance to openness in all its various forms is that human beings should treat each other with respect, acceptance, and trust. Humaneness, in its various manifestations, is a central value of open education, and warm, loving, and respectful relationships between child and child, child and adult, and adult and adult are seen as both means and ends. While such a philosophy is certainly not novel in the long history of education, it clashes rather directly with many of the habits and assump-

*It's quite possible to be very friendly, and visit one another's schools, and yet run schools with totally different approaches, even philosophies. The chief education officer trusts the heads to do their jobs, and the heads trust their staffs. It is to be hoped that, in turn, the staffs trust the children. This is a rare commodity in education because so many administrators don't want to trust anybody, and want everybody to do exactly what they say ought to be done.*

A British headmaster

tions associated with conventional schooling. When these habits are shrouded by a military academy atmosphere, to recall Barth's analogy, the clash may be especially noticeable. However, even in more typical classrooms some children are not really trusted to use time, materials, and space wisely or to make sensible decisions about their own learning activities. Sometimes, of course, teacher direction and control is warranted even in the most open of situations, but a major tenet of open education is that children *can* learn to become so trusted, and direct teacher intervention is nearly always regarded as a temporary alternative.

In keeping with the advice of Carl Rogers and Arthur Combs, among others, both the child and the teacher should achieve and exhibit a high degree of self-understanding and self-acceptance in order to foster optimal growth and high productivity. Given a healthy and robust self-definition, one is presumably better able (and more inclined) to accept and believe in others. To a remarkable extent, open educators accept this argument and seek to create settings within which accepting and respecting relationships predominate.

In addition to the pleasurable consequences of such conditions, an assumed pedagogical advantage is ascribed to the humane approach. Functioning within a setting free of conventional restraints and marked by interpersonal warmth, the learner has increased opportunity and motivation for the pursuit of ideas, skills, concepts, and questions that touch on his needs for growth. There is less risk in exploring uncharted territory, less punishment and disappointment in false starts or efforts that "fail," less concern about "winning" at someone else's expense, and more inclination to collaborate and share with other learners. As a consequence, the entire enterprise of learning will seem more satisfying and pleasurable to the learners, and their pursuit of it will be voluntary and enthusiastic rather than

resentful and bland.

A related tenet concerns the appropriate role of the teacher in the educational development of children. In brief, it holds that a teacher is not so much the manager and director but the facilitator of learning, the catalyst who is:

1. a resource person rather than an authority figure, helping individuals find ways of answering their questions and asking questions which stimulate the student's interest and pursuit of competence
2. a provisioner of the educational environment, providing a wide variety of learning activities and materials from which the students may choose and which may be used in divergent as well as convergent directions
3. an empathetic guide, encouraging variations in the learner's behavior and between learners, reflective of an awareness of and responsiveness to the learner's frame of reference
4. an active experimenter and perennial learner in his own right.[30]

The open school, then, is one in which students, with expert but often subtle guidance by the teacher, have many opportunities to assume and exercise responsibility and to draw on various resources in the choice, initiation, direction, and evaluation of their own learning experiences.

The literature of nongradedness, examined from a historical perspective, has always held as its major tenet that each child is different and therefore needs different treatment to develop his full potential. The tenets we have attributed to open education are wholly consistent with the nongraded philosophy; however, this has been more obvious in recent years than it was earlier. Pavan's doctoral study, for example, points out that the earlier writings of the nongraded movement tended to emphasize its organizational and administrative aspects, whereas recent statements have dealt more with philosophic aspects and thus have a more obvious kindred relationship with statements on open education.[31]

The same trend is discernible in the literature of team teaching, which in its early days focused primarily on administrative, mechanical, and procedural problems and tended to accept as givens such prevailing arrangements as teacher directed lessons, large group (over twelve) instruction, systematic scheduling of time and space, and other relatively formal modes of teaching. More recently, in sympathy with the arguments for open and informal approaches, proponents of teaming on both sides of the Atlantic have paid more attention to philosophic and humanistic considerations and less to such matters as coordinated scheduling and formal teaching.

Almost universally writers tend to assert that multiage grouping is a desirable basic arrangement. It is virtually an article of faith that subgroupings based on common talents, needs, interests, styles, and characteristics—though desirable at moments along the way—should always be temporary. The child's basic school relationships should exist within a broad rather than a narrow framework.

***Inventorying one's own values.*** In the preceding pages you may have found yourself in wholehearted and wholeminded agreement with all, some, or none of what was stated in the name of open education. If none, then there is obviously little predisposition on your part to subscribe to and develop an open program in your school. If all, the next question is, "How much similar sentiment is there among the teachers and parents with whom you work?" If only some, then presumably you will have to consider why you have the reservations you do—and again, the sentiments and convictions of your colleagues will be a factor to examine. Happily, there are some resources you can turn to for taking such an inventory.

Roland Barth has provided a helpful

taxonomy of twenty-nine assumptions educators ought to feel comfortable with before they take steps toward the adoption of open education. This list, which grew out of his doctoral study at Harvard, was published first in *Phi Delta Kappan* (September 1971) and subsequently in *The National Elementary Principal* (November 1972). More recently it appears, with complete discussion, in Barth's useful book *Open Education and the American School*.[32]

Barth's assumptions, which were reportedly endorsed by a number of British as well as American proponents of open education, have to do with: 1) children's learning, 2) conditions for learning, 3) social learning, 4) intellectual development, 5) evaluation, and 6) knowledge. Examples of the assumptions, with Barth's numbers, are:

*Children's learning*

1. Children are innately curious and will explore without adult intervention.

*Conditions for learning*

6. Play is not distinguished from work as the predominant mode of learning in early childhood.
7. Children have both the competence and the right to make significant decisions concerning their own learning.

*Intellectual development*

17. Verbal abstractions should follow direct experience with objects and ideas, not precede them or substitute for them.

*Evaluation*

19. Errors are necessarily a part of learning; they are to be expected and even desired, for they contain information essential for further learning.

*Knowledge*

26. Knowledge is a function of one's personal integration of experience and therefore does not fall neatly into separate categories or "disciplines."

Some of the assumptions—for example, No. 28, "There is no minimum body of knowledge which it is essential for everyone to know"—may seem a little far out even to those of progressive persuasion, but it is not necessary to be completely attuned to all of the assumptions before you take steps in the direction of openness. If a principal and his staff find that they are in essential sympathy with a significant number of the statements, this should stimulate some action.

Another guideline, adapted from a catalogue produced by the Education Development Center, lists four shared assumptions on which open education builds:

1. that children can best learn at their own rate and following their own curiosity and desire to learn
2. that the young learn responsibility by making real choices
3. that a teacher serves himself and his students best by helping them follow through on their questions and choices
4. that schools should be flexible learning centers, full of imaginative materials and serving as a base for a variety of life experiences.

From Pavan's doctoral thesis, noted earlier, comes a list of thirty-six principles and assumptions associated with nongrading. (The close links between open education and nongradedness have by now, I hope, been recognized and accepted by the reader.) The explication of those statements into some 170 behavioral implications, which was one of Pavan's achievements, will prove extremely helpful to those of us who agree with the philosophy of open education and want to know more about how to make it happen.

Until Pavan's list is separately published, only the microfilmed version is available, so I have selected three of her assumptions (numbers 3, 23, and 33) to share with the reader.[33] The operational manifestations of these three assumptions make a pretty good list of practices or conditions that ought to exist in an open school. You and your teachers are invited to check yourselves against them:

*Assumption* [3]: Each individual is unique and is accorded dignity and

*A good education would increase differences in learners' powers to contribute to society and decrease their differences with respect to the power to understand one another.*

Harold G. Shane

respect. Differences in people are valued. Therefore the school should strive to increase the variability of individual differences rather than stress conformity.
*Implications:*

a. Most children are working on different tasks.

b. Pupils' work displays show variety, not conformity.

c. Common assigned tasks encourage, suggest, and allow variability.

d. Pupil records consist in large part of the pupil's work or narrative reports, not checklists.

e. Pupils show interest in activities of others, without the need to imitate.

f. Groups are not addressed as "kindergarteners," "first-graders," or "five-, six-, or seven-year-olds."

*Assumption* [23]: Learning is the student's interaction with the world he inhabits. An individual learns by direct experience and manipulation of his environment; therefore the child must be allowed to explore, to experiment, to mess around, to play, and have the freedom to err.
*Implications:*

a. Good use is put to scrounged items, "stuff," and junk.

b. Nearly half of the children are manipulating materials rather than using books or paper and pencil.

c. Many children appear to be playing.

d. Accidents and messes happen but are cleaned up by the pupil himself whenever possible. No fuss is made unless a deliberate attempt has been made to break something useful.

e. Mistakes are expected and used as a positive force that indicates the area of need in order to achieve mastery.

*Assumption* [33]: A child strives mainly to improve his performance and develop his potential rather than to compete with others.
*Implications:*

a. Public comparisons are avoided in room—star charts, reading levels completed, listing of names of permanent group members, etc., are not in evidence.

b. Pupil work displayed consists of dissimilar items put up for the purpose of sharing work, not comparison.

c. Teacher checked papers contain no number, letter, or word grades but comments which refer to pupil improvement over past work or suggest ways to improve.

d. Each pupil files a dated item of his work for each subject area each month or so. He selects the item and observes his growth by studying the entire folder. [See also Pavan's item 31b: The child records his own progress in a diary or record book. Words and/or pictures describe the important events of the day.]

e. Reports to parents are in terms of accomplishments achieved and areas that need a concentration of effort.

f. Pupils do not seem to be preoccupied with what page a friend is on, or how many books he has read, or asking for other comparative data.

Judith Evans has constructed a classroom observation rating scale that helps to identify and measure some fifty features of the learning environment.[34] Weighted scores enable the observer to judge whether the rated features correspond with open education or with traditional education. A teacher questionnaire, parallel in form to the classroom rating scale, was also developed for use in workshops as a starting point for dialogue about teaching. A few examples from the observation scale are included here, along with the coded response most consistent with open education (in the scoring key, 1 = no evidence; 2 = infrequent or weak; 3 = moderate or occasional; 4 = strong, frequent evidence):

☐ Each child has a space for his personal storage, and the major part of the classroom is organized for common use. 1 2 3 (4)

☐ Day is divided into large blocks of time within which children, with the teacher's help, determine their own routine. 1 2 3 (4)

☐ The environment includes materials developed by the teacher. 1 2 3 (4)

☐ Teacher uses test results to group children for reading and/or math. (1) 2 3 4

☐ The work children do is divided into subject areas. (1) 2 3 4

☐ To obtain diagnostic information, the teacher closely observes the specific work or concern of a child and asks immediate, experience based questions. 1 2 3 (4)

☐ The class operates within clear guidelines made explicit. 1 2 3 (4)

☐ The children spontaneously look at and discuss each other's work. 1 2 3 (4)

☐ Teacher has helpful colleagues with whom she discusses teaching. 1 2 3 (4)

Similar scales are available or in some stage of development. In the immediate future there will probably be a great many other resources for helping school personnel measure their own views and practices against a standard of openness. Given such insight, one can then best decide what he wants to do about modifying what he believes and does.

# Helping It To Happen: The Principal's Role

There is, peculiarly, relatively little in the literature that deals especially with the role and problems of public school principals in the field of open education. One booklet, *The Headteacher's Role*, focuses on the role played by the heads (principals) of a number of schools in four educational authority areas in England. Based on extensive taped interviews, the booklet helps to show that effective leadership tends to flow from a well-articulated and functional philosophy and that successful heads see themselves "first and foremost, as teacher-trainers —as supports for staff, as catalysts, as innovators, as educationists. All gave priority to their role in the classroom, alongside of the teacher, subtly communicating style and philosophy." [35]

Barth and other American principals also emphasize that open education is not a superficial mechanism that can be quickly explained and mandated, but rather a fundamental philosophical and pedagogical system requiring the profound involvement of staff at all levels and over a considerable period of time. In fact, in listing several crucial conditions that should exist within schools if open classrooms are to be successfully implemented, Barth mentions philosophy first. His list is a useful one:

> The focus of change must be on personal philosophy rather than on classroom appearance; attention must be given to the development of children's personal qualities, not in place of but in addition to development of language and mathematical skills; supportive personnel within the schools must be provided for teachers; appropriate and abundant manipulative materials must be available for teachers and students; change must be gradual and orderly; and parents and teachers must be given the choice of whether they will participate in informal programs.[36]

*A school can be ineffective despite the most heroic efforts of a good principal, but the converse is seldom true, it being very rare that a school exceeds the quality of its head man.*

Fleishmann Commission, New York State

A principal bases what he does or does not do on what he knows, assumes, or believes, and on the commitments his knowledge and beliefs cause him to make. I hope this book will help principals examine and expand their knowledge of open education and the traditions from which it springs, and that it will show the relationship between open education and other approaches to which principals have committed themselves and strengthen their will to support openness.

Understanding and commitment, then, represent most of the motivation behind any principal's effort to implement a deserving idea. How to generate and encourage equivalent levels of understanding and commitment in others, so that they will be equally motivated to change, is a vital question to which many an "expert" has a ready answer. Barth's proposals, in my judgment, are solid, thoughtful, and deserving of full consideration.

Basic to most such proposals is that patience, painstaking work, and a lot of soul searching will be required all around. Hardly any authors talk about quick and easy approaches these days; on the contrary, they argue vociferously for the slow-but-steady approach. Hardly anyone claims that open education is what everybody should be doing; on the contrary, they caution that a small core of genuinely committed teachers is worth an army of the halfhearted. Hardly anyone promises that it's easy; on the con-

trary, they say it's downright tough!

Although he may need help from many sources in the process, one of the first things a principal who is interested in opening his school should do is examine the general health of the school. Part of his findings will depend on the general health of the larger system of which the school is a unit, but it appears increasingly that the basic unit of change is necessarily the individual school. Even within a generally unhealthy macrosetting, one particular school can literally flourish; conversely, one school can be in terrible trouble despite a robust surrounding system.

As indicators of organizational health one could examine the school's communications network, its decision-making machinery, the nature and intensity of the problems it is currently trying to solve, the apparent quality of interpersonal relationships (adult to adult, adult to child, child to child), the extent to which data based information guides policies, the clarity with which policies are understood, and similar manifestations of either good or bad internal conditions. Of major interest, surely, would be the school's history over the past decade or more in terms of improving and invigorating both its program and the way the program is implemented.

There is strong reason to believe, for example, that elementary schools in America should be abandoning, or at least modifying, such habitual practices as gradedness, age-grade pupil grouping, and the self-contained classroom. Highly desirable alternatives to these practices (nongradedness, multiage grouping, and cooperative teaching) have been on the scene for fifteen or more years. A reasonable question, it would seem, is, "To what extent has the school moved in the direction of one or more of these arrangements?" Another reasonable question is, "For what reasons?" If there has indeed been some effort toward change in these directions, one should ask how the staff and the community went about it, with what consequences, and with what implications, if any, for next steps.

Obviously, if these or similarly motivated changes have been ignored or rejected over the years, it is probable that the school and its patrons have a lot of educational catching up to do. On the other hand, if recent years have seen a strong trend toward openness, in whatever form, then the principal's problems and opportunities will surely be different.

Other changes may have been going on over time, some (such as the adoption of open plan architecture or of individually prescribed instruction) fairly visible, and others (such as gradual modifications in curriculum and teaching practices) less dramatic though perhaps equally fundamental. How time is viewed within the school program may have been changing to a way that is more congruent with openness. The old library may have been growing year by year into a significant resource center. Teachers may have been increasing their use of electronic and audiovisual devices and slowly building up a store of varied materials. Or, worse luck, the days of Old Mother Hubbard may have been creeping back in the face of several consecutive annual budget cuts. Examination of all such trends, good and bad, is a critical early step that helps the principal know both what he has going for him and what is likely to hold him back.

***Spaces and things: their contribution.*** We have pointed out that some changes tend to be more subtle than others. One of the least subtle aspects of educational reform over the past fifteen years has been in the field of school buildings and equipment. The topic is of such intrinsic interest, and it bears so closely on all other dimensions of open education, that the trend toward open plan buildings and the related question of how schools ought to be outfitted deserves special mention in this booklet.

Sometimes good elementary school education can and does take place in

*The primary basis for evaluating a school should be whether the students and teachers find it a satisfying place to be.*

Christopher Jencks

uncomfortable, inadequate, and even dangerous places, so it would be foolish to argue that the physical surroundings make a major contribution to learning. However, they *do* make a minor one, and often a well-designed, flexible, and well-provisioned school environment represents the difference between a good education and a merely acceptable one, if not the difference between good and superior education.

Note, of course, that I saw fit in that brave remark to include supplies and equipment along with the edifice and its surrounding site. One of the loudest messages from across the Atlantic, and indeed from the more progressive schools in our own history, is that children require the stimulus and the availability of countless "things": books, magazines, toys, animals, relics, furniture, construction materials, art supplies, games, puzzles, cameras, globes, looms, tools, boxes, fabrics, balls, models, collections, exhibits, and other paraphernalia *ad infinitum.*[37] Also important, the message continues, are the larger components of space children occupy: climbing structures and fixed or portable play equipment; dividers, movable walls, display boards, and other vertical surfaces; shelves, storage units, tables, and other bulky furnishings; and certain other built-ins such as sinks, closets, wardrobes, and corners or centers where continuing activities occur. These should be recognized as important ingredients in the child's school experience, and every staff should aim at having a rich and varied collection of loose and expendable items and a well-chosen arrangement of those that are more permanent.

Given a budget for, say, twenty-five books, open educators would almost unanimously recommend the purchase of twenty-five different titles, rather than twenty-five of the same title, whatever its virtue. Similarly, given space enough for twenty-five things, most open educators would somehow manage to squeeze in forty, or even more. Keeping the custodian happy,

though a favorite theme of many American principals, is scarcely of great concern to these enthusiastic collectors of miscellany, especially if their custodian has been thoroughly infected with the spirit of open education and recognizes that his own convenience is subservient to the well-being of the youngsters.

How the children use space and things is, by the way, an excellent and revealing source of diagnostic and evaluative information for teachers. Given free choice, what sorts of materials do they choose? How do they use them, and for how long? Do they share and include others, or do they seek exclusive rights? Do they invent uses other than the obvious and conventional ones? Pursuit of these and countless related questions could yield extremely useful data.

Similarly, how do children use space itself, both in and out of school? Under what conditions and in what ways do they seek privacy or stake out claims to space? Answers to these and other questions help teachers not only to understand individual children better, but also to understand how the available space, under the rules presently governing its use, does or does not provide for children's needs.

Interest corners or centers play a special role in open education. Where things are placed can apparently influence their usefulness to children. For example, Betsye Sargent tells how moving the art corner into the center of her room changed the kind of art the children produced and elicited more activities among interest areas than there had been previously.[38] Other teachers might reach different conclusions, but the important message here is that paying attention to such questions is a potentially valuable activity.

Another and related question concerns the flexibility, skill, and resourcefulness with which teachers themselves make use of the space and materials available to them. Even using resources equitably may be in question. A fair guess is that there is too little

sharing in most schools: Miss Nelson has the only decent papercutter and by far the best globe in the school (it was Mrs. Attlee's before she retired last June). Mr. Dunn has a whole closet full of orange and black construction paper (he painfully remembers October 1971, when Mrs. Attlee used all twenty reams of black for her Columbus Day program). No one dares to use the music room on Wednesday when "Toscanini" (Mr. Fribble) is at the Junior High, since the piano top was scratched last spring during Miss Saxe's rehearsal. A daring and potentially productive step by the principal could be to propose a shared resources program for the whole school, along with a study of unused, little-used, poorly-used, and ab-used space and equipment.

After observing the imaginative use of available space by British teachers, Lillian Weber recognized that a little-used though extensive space in American schools is the corridor. In view of the isolation imposed on teachers in their self-contained classrooms, she reasoned that the corridor could serve both as an overflow area where children could work independently and in groups and as a link between the otherwise unconnected classrooms. Furthermore, various models of small group learning and extraordinary uses of materials could exist in the corridors where the teachers could conveniently, but safely, observe them. Thus the open corridor, or open door, program came into being in New York City. An apparently simple notion led to a lively, interacting "community of classrooms," with the "corridor teacher" and the regular classroom teachers interacting and sharing in a growing number of ways.[39]

Not only the corridors, but other parts of American schools are often wasted and could be used to greater advantage. Lunchrooms are one example of space that sometimes sits idle for half or more of each day, as indeed do many auditoriums and assembly halls. Recently I visited a school where it was customary for four adults to supervise during the lunch hour and where the teachers in four nearby classrooms (which, incidentally had a useful corridor connecting them) wanted to improve their team teaching program. I suggested that they take over the lunchroom, which was a good size and shape for an open classroom, and relinquish their four classrooms to the cafeteria seating function. It immediately became apparent that for other school needs before and after the lunch hours, four smaller rooms would be more practical than the large lunchroom space, so steps to make the move were taken. One foreseeable cost, which at this writing remains unbudgeted, was carpeting the large space to make it more comfortable acoustically. The lunchroom supervisor was, predictably, none too enthusiastic. However, the whole staff was stimulated to reconsider its ways of thinking about space use in the school, and that, I think, is a necessary and desirable step.

When new schools are being planned or when renovation and remodeling become possible, then more satisfactory arrangements are clearly possible. Given the chance for this sort of fresh start, what does our recent experience tell us about the choices we should make?

Focusing primarily on the building itself, I recently examined the relationship between the school environment and the quality of children's learning experiences.[40] That exercise persuaded me all the more that open plan schools, in the appropriate design of which we have gradually become more adept, do represent the wave of the future and can make it easier for open education and related educational improvements to occur.

Criticisms of open plan designs have been many over the years, and it is true that some open designs have been neither graceful nor particularly functional. Storage spaces, "hideaway" areas, interest corners, and other amenities have sometimes been ignored or underplayed. However,

many of the better designs provide a nice combination of comfort, beauty, flexibility, and useability; they avoid the barnlike atmosphere of some totally open arrangements by a judicious mixture of various sized and various shaped areas. As these designs become more common, it seems likely that the already high acceptance of open plan architecture will increase.

As far as children are concerned, the educational and other advantages of good open plan schools seem to be well confirmed in practice. If research and experience teach us to the contrary, I am not aware of it; I am, however, fully aware of the problems that arise with respect to teachers. For them, at least in the beginning, there is sometimes discomfort because they are unprepared both psychologically and procedurally for the shift from self-contained classrooms to open spaces. Fear of noise and distraction, unfamiliarity with teaming and its logistical workings, fear of making mistakes in the presence of other teachers, worries about diminished or fleeting relationships with children, and lack of experience with sharing space and developing resources are among the handicaps most teachers will require help with while making the transition. Many school districts have neglected to provide their teachers with appropriate preparation for working in open space, usually with embarrassing if not disastrous results.

Luckily, the advantages and the pleasant surprises of working in open space often offset the initial fears and frustrations, so that the great majority of newly open schools tend to work quite well after the first shock wears off. Nevertheless, it is stupid and wasteful to ignore advance planning and, as a result, to diminish the potential effectiveness and harmony of the new arrangement, even if only for a few months. To guard against this, some school districts have set up training programs, including opportunities for actually working in open space—for example, in teacher centers, in summer programs, or in large spaces such as converted warehouses used as permanent open space training centers. Some districts make use of existing open space schools in an exchange teacher plan that permits a "regular" teacher to work for a few weeks in the place of an open space teacher, while the latter takes the regular teacher's place and in the process becomes a resource person—an informant about open education—in the regular teacher's school.

Principals, it goes almost without saying, can profit immensely from similar opportunities for general training, for exchange experiences in open schools, and for other experiences that prepare and equip them to lead the way.

***Providing support for teachers.*** Inventorying a staff's values and practices will shed light not only on the problems that need to be worked on, but also on the nature and the depth of the staff's intellectual, spiritual, and operational strength. The very process of examining these matters can increase school pride and heighten each teacher's awareness of the talents and resources he can draw on when need arises. Another benefit can be the realization that a variety of strengths exist within the school, the full range of which may not have been apparent while teachers' views and methods of work were largely concealed from each other. Furthermore, the discovery that divergence in styles and philosophies is both healthy and tolerable may be a welcome surprise to teachers.

Bussis and Chittenden have pointed out that open education is in fact a compromise between the authoritarian approach (all significant choices about learning belong to the teacher or the curriculum) and the permissive or laissez-faire approach (all significant choices are made by the child).[41] Open education is, rather, an approach in which choices and decisions are the joint responsibility of both teacher and child; it is criterion referenced rather than norm referenced educa-

tion, means referenced as well as goals referenced. Significantly, the means are almost unrestricted in range and variety, and the goals can be approached by different children in many different ways.

Some open education programs have more built-in structure than others, and, understandably, these examples are often found in urban settings. Possibly the largest urban open education program in the country, with some 10,000 children involved, is in Hartford, Connecticut. Randazzo and Arnold have provided a lively description of how Hartford's program functions and how it came about. They suggest that if free and storefront schools are on the far left on the individualized education continuum, next to them at the left of center would be the British infant school and slightly to the right would be "Hartford, with its highly structured, integrated, teacher-planned but child-directed day."[42]

In a complimentary appraisal of the Hartford program, open education expert Vincent Rogers attributes its success to several factors, including: 1) the wedding of freedom with structure, or directedness, 2) strong top level leadership in the school system, 3) parental involvement from the beginning, and 4) a strong program of teacher training and sustained on-the-job help by skilled resource teachers who work out of Hartford's teachers' center.[43]

Over and over, the reader will have noted, both British and American educators emphasize the necessity for providing support of many kinds for the teaching staff. The on-the-job help that Rogers refers to is obviously a marvelous boon to teachers, and without it the road would probably be rough.

Let us accept as a fact that it is very demanding on the teacher's resources to work within an open framework, whether it be nongradedness, team teaching, the open plan classroom, or the British oriented approach that dominates this discussion. Although a lazy style may be possible

in open education—just as it is surely possible within the more private confines of the self-contained classroom —it is far more likely that opting for openness will create serious pressures and challenges. Coaxing or catapulting a teacher into an open situation is bound to backfire in some way, even if the teacher has remarkable professional loyalty and dedication. It is far better that he or she should go into the situation knowingly and willingly, although even in this happier event the probability of stress and strain remains high.

From Cogan come two pieces of valuable advice to guide us as we promote openness.[44] One observation, with which nearly all other writers earnestly agree, is that adequate understanding and adequate supporting resources are crucial to the successful incorporation of innovations. Principals should have little difficulty recognizing the implications for their own behavior in this statement.

Cogan's other observation, though no more difficult to comprehend, could, if accepted and followed, have a much more fundamental impact on the role of the principal. The kind of help that teachers need, he indicates, is not the hit-or-miss, sporadic, scattershot "supervision" for which most teachers are forced to settle, but rather a focused, continuing, clinically oriented, and highly individualized program of inclass support. Clinical supervision, as Cogan and other authors have used the term over some fifteen years, is a subcategory of general supervision within which the events of the classroom are analyzed and hypotheses for the improvement of teaching are worked out by the teacher and the supervisor following firsthand observation. In view of the fact that most principals find neither the time nor the stomach for frequent and intensive classroom centered supervision, the admonition to increase both the amount and the quality of such activity will probably cause many a reader to quail, or even to rebel in principle.

Cogan's analysis, however, has the powerful ring of authenticity. Given the problems teachers are expected to cope with even under fairly stable and unchanging conditions, the "benign neglect" with which their professional colleagues treat them is at least inexcusable and at worst immoral. No other so-called profession leaves the development, even the survival, of its members so much to chance. No other calling equips its workers so meagerly for the performance of their roles, and hardly any other group invests so little in inservice growth and development. Supervision by the principal is the one provision commonly made for the furtherance of staff development, yet for a variety of reasons most principals neglect the functions of making inclass observations and designing followup activities to help teachers learn new behaviors.

Among the reasons for this sorry fact is that principals, like the teachers for whom they carry certain responsibilities, have too little training and skill in the supervisory realm. A related explanation is that, again like teachers, they tend to work in the isolated framework of the self-contained school and therefore fail to align themselves with other principals and supervisors in programs of team administration, team supervision, or even shared training.

IDEA, with its notion of a "league of cooperating schools," has proposed that principals with common needs and purposes can profitably join together in a working federation. Sharing resources and achievements, attacking mutual problems together, trading off and exchanging specialized talents, and studying professional topics jointly are activities through which principals can increase their competencies and their ability to respond to teachers' needs. If principals visited classrooms in groups in order to train themselves in Cogan's clinical supervision cycle, it could prove to be an extraordinarily effective way of sharpening their supervisory talents and, at the same time, provide unusually comprehensive feedback for

*. . . for most teachers, useful knowledge about new forms of instruction is in itself not enough. The teacher needs a sustained, expert program to help him relinquish his existing classroom behavior in favor of new behavior, a program strong enough to help him apply such competencies to the specific conditions that obtain for each child, for each class, and for the teacher himself. Such a program must focus on* inclass supervision, *on what we have been calling "clinical supervision."*

Morris L. Cogan

the teachers who were observed.

It may seem that we have strayed from the topic of openness, but I submit, with Cogan, that until the principal has developed his supervisory talents to a point where he can be truly useful to his teachers as a source of professional counsel and inspiration, neither open education nc any other good cause is likely to thrive in his school.

The British experience is sharply relevant to this argument. Over and over we are told that the British head teacher is very little an administrator and very much a fellow teacher who works closely with the staff to develop curriculums and programs. This is not the same as claiming that British school heads are more skillful in supervision than American heads, but it is to say that when teachers and their nominal supervisors are earnestly involved together, productivity may well increase. It will surely increase, our argument goes, when there is also a high level of expertise influencing the exchange.

Of special interest is the role played by the advisory system in many English educational communities. These advisors are not supervisors in the same sense as American teachers use the term; rather, their role is more nearly that of a helping teacher. In some places, the "ground rules" say that advisors may not enter a classroom unless invited by the teacher. They do not use teachers' names in their reports; they help expedite teachers' orders for materials; they offer their experience and help in the classroom; they take over classrooms at times so that teachers can attend workshops or visit other schools; and they direct workshops at the (extremely important) teachers' centers, which have become a significant factor in promoting inservice teacher growth.

Another interesting fact of the British experience is that in general teachers enjoy a greater amount of sincere respect in Britain than they apparently do in America. This is evident in the usual courteous, mannerly behavior of British children and adults toward school personnel, in the optimistic assumptions about teachers' motives and skills that inhere in typical regulatory policies, in the ways support is provided without interference, and in the teachers' center idea as it has developed in England. There is an element of trust, not only in the school heads but in the teachers, that accompanies respect and that undoubtedly makes itself felt in the lives and morale of all of the people involved with the school. Without belaboring the point, let us simply admit that in the United States teachers occupy a somewhat lower estate.

Given this fact, however lamentable, Cogan's proposals take on added significance. If we continue to disregard teachers, to exhibit little interest in (or talent for) helping them in their daily classroom activities, to operate on a fraudulent business-as-usual basis while their frustrations multiply, or to remain neutral or aloof while proposals for school improvement (or the actual deschooling of society) scorch the surrounding air, teachers are likely either to despair or to hold more fiercely to the repertoires they possess. If, on the other hand, we begin to deal with teachers' daily concerns more helpfully, within the framework of a clinical relationship, then as a group they will develop a stronger sense of worth, of basic competence, and of readiness to consider alternative approaches.

# Some Final Thoughts

Openness, the many dimensions of which we have scanned in these pages, represents a powerful and attractive option for professional educators. It is not an option to be taken lightly, but neither is it beyond the grasp of the talented and well motivated. It is not possible to achieve openness overnight, but each day teachers can take at least one significant step in its direction. Like chess it is a game of infinite challenge and complexity, yet there is room for participants who are still learning the fundamentals. It is not a Hula-Hoop, either, destined to enjoy a dazzling but brief prominence: Its lineage is a distinguished one, its claims on our attention are anything but frivolous, and it deserves our most serious and dedicated attention.

These are not the best of times for educational reform, but surely they are not the worst. True, there may be much disenchantment about what education can and cannot do, or has or has not done. But the teacher still has many friends among those he has served, and in fifteen years or more of "innovative" efforts he has discovered a lot about what works and what doesn't. His loyalty to grade level expectancy standards has, let us hope, reached a new low for this century; his skepticism about the legitimacy and usefulness of professional self-containment has, let us hope, reached a new high. His sense of how children actually develop and learn is much sharper than it was a decade or two ago. His awareness of the ways children of different sorts can be educationally helpful to each other must certainly be greater than it was. He is by no means as sure now as he was ten years ago of the efficacy of teacher directed learning and the suitability of a standard curriculum. If these and other signs of progress do in fact exist, then is it not reasonable to expect that educational progress should continue?

My hope is that these pages have accomplished several purposes. Especially obvious is my intention to show that openness of the British variety is, though undeniably something quite fresh and exciting, a natural development within a long and distinguished tradition. Americans and Britons have shared in that tradition, and the central themes and postulates of open education are not dramatically different from those that guided the progressive educators and, more recently, advocates of other American school reforms. Therefore, I have argued, it is not necessary to learn a whole new language or embrace a radically new faith in order to opt for openness.

A second goal has been to persuade principals and teachers that some of the things they may have been involved in over recent years represent excellent first steps toward openness as ideally defined. In particular, efforts to humanize the classroom atmosphere, to employ a greater variety of materials, and to personalize the educational program are in keeping with that ideal. Steps toward nongrading, toward more heterogeneous pupil growings, toward opening the physical environment, and toward greater intrastaff collaboration have been identified as excellent moves toward superior education. And since many schools have made at least modest efforts in one or more of these directions, it seems not unreasonable to hope that school improvement will gain a great deal of momentum in the next few years despite the rather grumpy mood of the nation as a whole.

*The life of the change agent in education is never an easy one. He is always accused of destroying standards whether he is or not. Nevertheless, having been engaged in the business of educational change for 25 years, the motto I recommend to anyone perplexed about educational innovation is this: "When in doubt, do it!"*

Harold Howe II

We fail to realize, in short, how much we have going for us and how little it would take to make some real changes on the American scene. It will be hard work, true enough, but no miracles are necessary even if they were possible. No sacred principles (except those that inspire the dullards among us) need be sacrificed. No revolution has to be started. All we have to do is take more seriously what we have been saying for a long time about our obligations to children.

Principals occupy a strategic role in this continuing process, and the challenge of openness to them is matched by its opportunities. Of those we have suggested here, none is greater than the opportunity to serve teachers better through improved supervision. If the American principal can develop the skills that supervision in its best sense requires, and if as a result the principal-teacher relationship can acquire the same helping, guiding, sharing, and trusting qualities that one finds in the best of open classrooms, then the phrase "head teacher" will begin to lose its British accent.

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# Appendix: Where To Find More Information

A great asset to the open education movement is the abundance, the vitality, and the freshness of its literature. In the text I have pointed out that its foundations and therefore many primary sources can be traced over several decades; however, most of the books, pamphlets, and articles to which interested principals and teachers should refer have publication dates in the 1970's. Bibliographies, in fact, are soon out of date as each flood of new materials comes into being. This is all to the good, of course, since the easier one's access to descriptive material about open education, the likelier one will come to understand it.

Within the text and in my introduction I have referred to publications, such as Alexander Frazier's ASCD booklet, that deserve a wide audience.

For NAESP members, two recent NAESP publications have already provided an excellent introduction to the topic: Sir Alec Clegg's *Revolution in the British Primary Schools* (1971) and the November 1972 issue of *The National Elementary Principal,* "Perspectives on Open Education." The September 1972 issue of *Principal* also deserves reexamination, since it deals with "The New Schoolhouse" in ways that complement our presentation here.

Most of the available American literature has focused until recently on the British examples, and cautions abound to the effect that a literal transplantation into American schools would be unwise even if it were possible. However, the British oriented literature is of such good quality and of such general usefulness (certainly at least half of it is relevant here), that to wholly disregard or distrust it would be foolish indeed.

An astute critic of the literature, Mary Jo Bane, has said of it that "attempts at theory come off rather poorly; descriptions of classrooms are often quite good, and the best are very good indeed." * On the whole I agree with this appraisal; I do, however, believe there is a larger theory base than Bane recognizes, especially if we view open education within the progressive tradition.

The series "Informal Schools in Britain Today," available in the United States through Citation Press, includes twenty-three booklets aimed primarily at describing the way British primary schools work. Works by British authors that have circulated widely in the U.S. include John Blackie's *Inside the Primary School* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), regarded by many as the standard source book on the open education of children aged three to eleven; *Family Grouping in the Primary School,* by Lorna Ridgway and Irene Lawton (New York: Agathon Press, 1971), a basic discussion of vertical, multiage grouping; and *The Integrated Day in the Primary School,* by Mary Brown and Norman Precious (New York: Agathon Press, 1970).

Returning to American sources, the *New Republic* articles by Joseph Featherstone (now available in a 1971 Liveright publication, *Where Children Learn),* and the enormously influential book, *Crisis in the Classroom,* by Charles E. Silberman (Random House, 1970), probably have informed more readers and stimulated more interest in open education than any other publications to date. They remain pertinent, although the contributions of Lillian Weber (*The English Infant School and Informal Education,* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), Charles Rathbone (*Open Education: The Informal Classroom,* New York:

* Bane, Mary Jo. "Essay Review: Open Education." *Harvard Educational Review* 42: 273-81; May 1972. p. 274.

Citation Press, 1971), Vincent Rogers (*Teaching in the British Primary School,* New York: Macmillan, 1970), Robert Fisher (*Learning How To Learn,* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), Edward Yeomans (*Education for Initiative and Responsibility,* Boston: National Association of Independent Schools, 1967), and numerous others provide excellent additional sources.

The most recent and in several respects one of the better books on open education is *Open Education and the American School,* by Roland Barth. (See footnote 23.) Barth, like most of the readers of this booklet, is a practicing elementary school principal. His was one of the schools I visited in November 1972, and it was for me an inspiration to see how he was coping with the problem of being an innovator in a fairly conservative setting. Another book written from the vantage point of the American elementary principalship is *Schools Are For Children* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971). In it, Alvin Hertzberg and Edward F. Stone make many concrete suggestions for teachers and principals who want to implement open education "in specifically American terms."

Two organizations from which emanate a great many useful materials on open education are Education Development Center (55 Chapel St., Newton, Mass. 02160) and National Association of Independent Schools (Liberty Square, Boston, Mass. 02109). EDC has spent more than ten years producing materials to define and bolster the open education movement. With the help of a Carnegie Corporation grant, EDC has produced some twenty films and thirty publications that can profitably be used by people who are studying open education or seeking to implement it. More such materials are in preparation.

NAIS, similarly, has numerous publications designed to familiarize school people and parents with the philosophy and techniques of open education. Its "One-stop Library on the Integrated Day" now includes eleven titles, the latest of which (Peter Orton and Wayne Dickison, *Change to Open Education: Two Schools in the Process,* 1972) provides detailed accounts of the change process in a public and in an independent school

Yeomans has prepared a most helpful booklet on the problem of *Preparing Teachers for the Integrated Day* (NAIS, 1972). It reports on the role of the British "advisories," on teachers' centers, and on teachers' workshops.

Two good bibliographies listing books, articles, pamphlets, and films are found on pp. 79-81 of the November 1972 issue of *The National Elementary Principal* and in Roland S. Barth and Charles H. Rathbone, *A Bibliography of Open Education* (EDC, 1971). Another annotated bibliography, along with source listings, is found in a very good paperback (*Open Education: A Sourcebook for Parents and Teachers,* Bantam Books, 1972) edited by Ewald B. Nyquist and Gene R. Hawes.

A gold mine of imaginative ideas for extending the learning environment into the community is R. S. Wurman's *Yellow Pages of Learning Resources* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1972; distributed by NAESP). It provides one useful starting point for an open education curriculum that will fascinate children.

Finally, I would mention the Institute for the Development of Educational Activities, Inc. (I/D/E/A), whose program known as Individually Guided Education (IGE) is one of the most promising on the American scene (and also, by the way, in many American sponsored overseas schools). IGE facilitates the use of open approaches, and the training package as developed by I/D/E/A over the past five years with my occasional assistance is one in which I have special confidence. A good introduction to it can be found in an Education U.S.A. Special Report, *IGE: Individually Guided Education and Multiunit School,* published by National School Public Relations Association, 1801 N. Moore St., Arlington, Va. 22209.

# A Glossary of Related Terms

*Integrated day:* A school day in which children may pursue various interests or themes, without regard to artificial divisions by subject areas or time periods. In this volume, though there are some differences, we use the term "open education" as an equivalent term.

*Multiage grouping* (essentially synonymous with multigrade, vertical, interage, mixed age, cross age, or family grouping): The establishment of classes or teams of children whose ages, and therefore other characteristics that influence learning and development, fall within a spectrum of two or more years. In short, it is a scheme that ensures greater heterogeneity than would be found in a group of approximately the same age.

*Nongradedness:* A "vertical" organizational framework that, by deliberate contrast with the formally graded arrangement, seeks: 1) to be free of fixed curriculum prescriptions for each age group of pupils, preferring individualized learning experiences appropriate to the needs and interests of each unique child; 2) to make provision for differentiated *rates* of progress as well as variations in the nature of the learning experiences available; 3) to emphasize intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation, hence to eliminate or radically modify competitive marking and promoting mechanisms; 4) to maximize *success* as a factor in the pupil's daily school experience and to adjust the pressures for achievement to each child's actual capabilities; and 5) to establish pupil groups on the basis of heterogeneity (in age, ability, interest, outlook, and so forth) as well as homogeneity.

*Open plan (or open space) school:* An essentially architectural term, referring to informal multipurpose space built (or renovated) to house between 50 and 100 or more children and relatively free of fixed interior partitions and equipment. Such a design almost always implies the use of some form of cooperative teaching and nongradedness. Generally, too, the open space is carpeted for functional as well as acoustical reasons.

*Teacher center:* A center that has been set up, either within a local school district or as part of a regional service effort, to provide teachers with opportunities for curriculum development, creating and testing of materials and ideas, and otherwise promoting professional development. Most of these centers, a list of which is available,* are oriented to the mission of open education.

*Team teaching:* A "horizontal" staffing arrangement that, by deliberate contrast with the self-contained classroom approach, calls for a *group* of adults to work closely together with a given population of children. Coinvolvement in *all* dimensions of the educational program characterizes genuine teaming: mutual long range planning; frequent discussion of the specific daily planning of each teaching member; collaborative direct work with children; frequent exchange of professional criticism and information (peer supervision); collaborative evaluation of specific and long range program events; and continuous, systematic analysis of individual pupil progress and needs. Often roles are differentiated, and sometimes the team includes various nonprofessional or paraprofessional colleagues; hence the term "differentiated staffing" is in growing use.

* *Guide to Teacher Centers.* New York: Scholastic Teacher, 1972. p. 31.

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Dr. Anderson has served on committees of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the National Education Association. He has also served as consultant or speaker throughout the United States and abroad.

He is author of *Teaching in a World of Change;* coauthor, with John I. Goodlad, of *The Nongraded Elementary School;* and coeditor, with Harold G. Shane, of *Education in Anticipation of Tomorrow.* His numerous publications, American and foreign, include journal articles, yearbook contributions, and chapters in books of readings.